
Version 5, told by Eddy Isaac

The Narrator

Eddy Isaac was a Southern Tutchone from the now abandoned village of Aishihik where I lived in 1962-63. He was a cheerful, portly gentleman who died in 1968. His father, old Chief Isaac, guided the first whites to come into Southern Tutchone country—Glave and Dalton in 1890 and 1891 (McClellan n.d.b: 53-54)—but Eddy did not remember this event so well as his older brother, the present Chief Albert Isaac (see Version 6).

Eddy himself was raised as a 'Favoured Child' a status which seems to have conferred a certain dignity upon him. His wife, Sophie, is from the Northern Tutchone settlement of Selkirk. They lived and hunted for the most part with the son-in-law, husband of their only surviving daughter. The younger couple has thirteen children. Eddy and his wife; Eddy's older brother, Albert, and his wife; and Charley Stevens, whose wife was a sister of Eddy and Albert; these formed the real nucleus of the Aishihik band, although relations between the

three older couples were sometimes strained. Eddy and Albert and Mrs. Stevens belong to the *kaⁿdjlt'* or Crow moiety, while Charley is 'agUnda, or Wolf, as are Eddy's and Albert's wives (McClellan n.d.b: Chapter 14).

Eddy and one of his older grandsons came to visit me in my cabin on the morning of October 15, 1962. The chief reason for the visit was to ask me to write a letter to a mail order house. After he had attended to the business, Eddy regaled me with an account of how a bear had severely mauled him when he was a boy of fifteen. This led to his telling me the story of the bear husband, although, because I was serving tea at the time, I did not record the beginning of it. This is the first story Eddy told me; I had been at Aishihik for about a month.

Eddy had had considerable contact with whites, but his English was rapid and ungrammatical and was very much slurred. I found it particularly difficult to follow.

The Story

[The first part of the story is missing.] ... In the fall time, first time, they make a hole. The bear says to put the den some place where nobody goes. It's near Chilkat.

"I don't think [it should be] this place. We have to go to another place," the girl says.

The bear believes her. They go to another place.

"I want a ridge." [And the girl chooses] where the people hunt on the side of a ridge as a place to sleep.

They sleep. Every month they get up and turn around.

It is spring time now—March or

April. They do it again [i.e., wake, turn around, and go to sleep again]. It is kind of April. She makes a snowball, that bear's wife. She wants somebody to find that.

They sleep again. They get up again. That bear dreams.

"Somebody will kill me," he tells his wife.

Q. How does he know?

A. He is *natci* [dream doctor].

He is going to fix his teeth—going to sharpen them.

Well, pretty soon a dog is coming, barking.

"Now somebody has found us," he

tells his wife. "Your brothers are coming this way, all your brothers." [I missed something here, but evidently the bear prepared to go out and kill the brothers.]

"Don't do that!" said the girl.

Well, pretty soon the dog goes into that place.

"I am going to bother those men!" says the bear. He jumps, and he holds the dog.

The people watch behind, and they have bows and arrows. And they kill the bear. He rolls down, and he throws the dog this way and this way.

Down there they make a fire and try to cook. The youngest brother goes back up to the bear hole. His sister comes out and talks.

"You tell my mother to come with clothes."

That kid runs back and tells the others, "My mother must come with clothes!"

They go down. Five brothers.

Everybody used to be like bear [*sic*].

They take that bear wife home, and they make a special house for her. Bad smell. Kind of turn to animal, you know. [Not clear whether she smells bad or whether people smell bad to her.]

The same time, in the winter time, she has two kids already, you know. They look like bears and Indians [i.e., a combination].

The two little bears grow.

The girl and her children stay [in their special house] one year. Now they stay inside the [regular] house.

After a while her brothers tell her,

"Sister, you are going to put on a bearskin!"

The two youngest brothers say that to that woman and her kids.

Well, they have bearskins. "We want to play. You do like bears!"

"How come? No, if I put it on, I'll

turn to bear," she said.

It is the summer time too. They take the bearskin, and they put it on their sister. And she turns like a bear, you know. They had just put it on, and then their sister tears that one and tears that one! She puts her kids ahead of her. They all run away. Nobody can do anything. Nobody has a gun.

Q. What do bears eat in their dens in winter?

A. They just wake up once a month, and they have berries.